

Preventing domestic and family violence in LGBTIQ+ families:

What can Early Childhood Education and Care Centres do?



Preventing domestic and family violence means stopping the violence before it starts. How can we do this? By addressing the underlying reasons that violence exists in the community including common attitudes and beliefs.

The responsibility for preventing family violence sits with everyone. This tip sheet outlines some key actions that can be taken in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres (ECEC) to prevent violence in LGBTIQ+ families.

1. Actively challenge gender norms and biases

Research shows that breaking down traditional gender stereotypes can reduce the level of violence in the community. As gender is learnt at an early age, pre-schools are key places to support the development of a diverse understanding of gender.

Encourage children of any gender to participate in all activities regardless of their gender. Identify ways of encouraging children to explore gendered activities in different ways (dress up, trucks, makeup station etc.) using intentional teaching practices to model use of appropriate language.

Talk about and brainstorm ideas for exploring complex issues about body diversity, bodily autonomy, self-determination, biological diversity, sex, gender, and sexuality.

Challenge incorrect assumptions that all children are either girls or boys and that everyone's body looks clearly male or female.

Foster relationships amongst boys that nurture kindness, compassion and respect.

Respond to staff and children who use discriminatory language, and have a classroom discussion about inclusion (e.g. "that's so gay", "throwing like a girl" or transphobic jokes).

2. Promote inclusion, respect and equality

Undertake **organisational change activities**, such as the review/development of policies and activities focusing on the school as a workplace that is non-discriminatory and promotes gender equality.

Be actively inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people and relationships (e.g. include visual supports like LGBTIQ+ posters, flags, teach the notion of 'family' in an inclusive way including lesbian mums, gay dads, and gender diverse parents).

Upskill staff on LGBTIQ+ inclusivity and undertake **professional development**.

3. Celebrate and educate about LGBTIQ+ people

Invite LGBTIQ+ guest speakers and do activities with this learning focus (concentrating on each letter of the acronym).

Celebrate LGBTIQ+ events, history and people.

Acknowledge that everyone's body is different and that is something to celebrate!

4. Promote respectful relationships

Bring to the learning spaces age-appropriate books/images/activities on body safety and respectful relationships based on these colouring in **resources**.

Actively demonstrate respectful interactions between yourself, children, parents and other staff.

Teach students about respectful relationships and the skills to maintain them.

5. Support gender diverse children to be themselves

Ensure your pre-school or centre's **forms** are inclusive of students and parents who have intersex variations or are sexuality and/or gender diverse (e.g. offer gender non-binary and other as gender options).

Be aware a child's gender expression may change, do not judge or assume.

Become aware of the language used in the centre and promote inclusivity (e.g. avoid splitting classrooms or activities into "girls" and "boys").

6. Create a culture which says no to violence

Read books about body safety and discuss it with children (examples **here**).

Build support and funding for a **whole-of-school/centre approach** to respectful relationships education; research shows this is most successful.

Join an initiative like #StrongSafeFabulous to show your centre's support for the prevention of DFV in the LGBTIQ+ community. Download the free #StrongSafeFabulous Toolkit **here**.

Watch one of our #StrongSafeFabulous panel discussions **here** on demand to learn from experts about the prevention of DFV in LGBTIQ+ families.

Be aware that promoting respectful relationships may lead to disclosures of family violence. Establish clear referral pathways and ensure staff are adequately trained to respond to disclosures. Young children may not disclose domestic and family violence, so be aware of the signs (**read more here**).

